

Theory of Pratibimba

Brahman and jIva are like bimba and pratibimba. Just as bimba and pratibimba are non-different, Brahman and jIva are also non-different.

Objection 1: But bimba and pratibimba are different. Maitra standing beside Chaitra sees that Chaitra and his pratibimba in a mirror are different. In fact, even Chaitra also sees the difference of his hand and the pratibimba of his hand.

Answer: No. The difference of bimba and pratibimba appears only as long as one does not analyze properly. Once analyzed, they are understood to be one and the same. If Maitra analyses carefully, he notices that whatever lakshaNAs are there in bimba Chaitra, the very same lakshaNAs are in pratibimba Chaitra also. Hence, he concludes – this pratibimba is that bimba only. Similarly, Chaitra also understands that the pratibimba-hand is bimba-hand only.

Objection 2: We do get this pratyabhijnA that pratibimba-face is bimba-face where the mirror is completely clean. In case the reflecting surface is of copper, then we get unclear pratibimba and nose, eyes etc. do not appear clearly. So, such pratyabhijnA that bimba and pratibimba are same does not arise in those cases.

Answer: The rule applies only when the reflecting surface is completely clean.

Objection 3: In case of pratyabhijnA, which is subsequent knowledge, there must be abhijnA, the previous knowledge. In case of eyes, one cannot have abhijnA as eyes can be seen only through mirror. Therefore, pratyabhijnA of pratibimba is not possible.

Answer: The chakshu-rashmi (eye-rays) get reflected from the mirror and perceive the face directly. Thus, abhijnA is possible and hence pratyabhijnA is also possible.

Objection 4: There is no pratyabhijnA in case of pratibimba. On the other hand, one gets the knowledge – these are two, bimba and pratibimba.

Answer: Two ingredients are required for pratyabhijnA in case of pratibimba. One, knowledge that the pratibimba is seen due to upAdhi and second, knowledge that pratibimba has the same lakshaNAs as those of bimba. Once these two ingredients are there, pratyabhijnA is bound to arise that pratibimba is bimba.

Objection 5: Maitra is before mirror. He sees the pratibimba of Chaitra coming behind him. From this, he says – I am seeing the pratibimba of Chitra and not bimba-Chaitra. He does the anumAna of bimba-Chaitra. Thus, his anumAna of non-difference of bimba and pratibimba is contradictory to perception of difference of bimba and pratibimba.

Answer: The feeling that ‘I am seeing upAdhi-avachchhinna-pratibimba’ and ‘I am doing the anumAna of upAdhi-anavachchhinna-bimba’ is not contradictory to the knowledge of non-difference of pratibimba and bimba. upAdhi-avachchhinna-x can be seen while anumAna can be done of upAdhi-anavachchhinna-x.

Objection 6: Chaitra facing east before mirror sees pratibimba to be facing west. If bimba and pratibimba were to be the same, Chaitra should believe that he is facing west. And also, the children should not confuse that there is some other child in the mirror.

Answer: As answered in response to objection 4, two ingredients are required for pratyabhijnA. In cases cited in the instant objection, there is absence of second ingredient i.e., pratibimba is not determined to be having the same lakshaNAs as bimba. Once this ingredient is there, even when the pratibimba is seen to be facing west, one gets the knowledge – this is my face.

Objection 7: ‘This is my face’ is used in a secondary sense just as the footprints on a dusty road can be referred as ‘These are my feet’.

Answer: Well, once two ingredients as mentioned above are present, there is no reason to hold the difference of bimba and pratibimba. And once the knowledge of non-difference is present, there is no point in imagining secondary usage.

Objection 8: Unless one concedes knowledge of difference-of-bimba-and-pratibimba, how can one aver that this knowledge of difference-of-bimba-and-pratibimba is illusory? And knowledge of difference along with knowledge of differentiator (upAdhi) is not seen to co-exist with knowledge of non-difference.

Answer: The reasoning is invalid in case of yellow conch. Yellow conch is analogous to pratibimba whereas white conch is analogous to bimba. There is a vyApti – wherever there is conch-hood, there is white-hood. Thus, despite seeing the yellow-conch, one has the knowledge that it is white-conch only through anumAna. Still, due to the upAdhi of jaundice disease, one sees yellow conch. Here, despite the perceptual knowledge of difference-of-white-conch-vis-à-vis-yellow-conch and the knowledge of differentiator disease, there is seen to be knowledge of non-difference of yellow-conch and white-conch. Thus, it is only due to upAdhi that there is illusory perception of difference of bimba and pratibimba.

Objection 9: If the knowledge-of-non-difference-of-bimba-and-pratibimba were to be pramA then it would remove the ignorance-of-non-difference-of-bimba-and-pratibimba. This ignorance is the material cause of difference-of-bimba-and-pratibimba. In the absence of ignorance, there cannot be knowledge of difference-of-bimba-and-pratibimba.

Answer: Not so. Because removal of ignorance is not the sole reason. Removal of upAdhi is another supporting reason. Unless ignorance-of-non-difference-of-bimba-and-pratibimba and upAdhi both are removed, one cannot deny the continued perception of illusion.

Objection 10: How can it be so? Once we know a pot, there is no experience – I don't know pot. The pot-knowledge removes the prAk-abhAva of pot-knowledge without the assistance of anything else. Similarly, knowledge of non-difference-of-bimba-and-pratibimba should remove the illusory knowledge of difference-of-bimba-and-pratibimba.

Answer: 'I don't know a pot' is caused by the AvaraNa-shakti of ignorance. Despite it being removed, in places of bAdhita-anuvritti, illusion might arise on account of non-removal of upAdAna-amsha of illusion. This upAdAna-amsha is vikshepa-shakti of ignorance. Now, this upAdAna-amsha is not removed on account of upAdhi which acts as a prohibitor. This is like prArabdha being the upAdhi in the case of jIvanmukti. The knowledge of Brahman removes the AvaraNa-shakti of avidyA. However, on account of prArabdha, the vikshepa-shakti is not removed which leads to perceptual duality.

Objection 11: What is the material cause of illusion-of-difference-of-bimba-and-pratibimba? If mUIAvidyA is held as the material cause, then its effect will be vyAvahArika. And if mUIAvidyA is not held as material cause, then the assertion that entire creation is effect of mUIAvidyA will be violated.

Answer: There is no incongruence if the difference is accepted as vyAvahArika as it is equally mithyA.

Also, there is anumAna pramANa in the identity of bimba and pratibimba. The anumAna goes like this: Pratibimba is non-different from bimba.

On account of:

- (i) Possessing the extra-ordinary features present in bimba. OR
- (ii) Not possessing contradictory features to those possessed by bimba. OR
- (iii) Not being produced by a cause by which bimba was not produced.

Objection 12: The anumAna cited is incorrect. In case of (ii), the pratibimba is seen to be west-faced while bimba is east-faced. Thus, there is swarUpa-asiddhi in hetu (ii). Similarly, hetu (iii) is equally faulty with swarUpa-asiddhi as pratibimba is caused by mirror while bimba is not caused by mirror. The cause-effect relation of mirror and pratibimba is proved by anvaya-vyatireka.

Answer: The contradictory attribute of being west-faced is created by upAdhi. The pratibimba does not possess any contradictory swAbhAvika features of bimba. Hence, there is no swarUpa-asiddhi.

Also, the anvaya-vyatireka serves its purpose in creation of sambandha between upAdhi and bimba. Also, it cannot be presumed while refuting the anumAna that pratibimba is born after bimba. Hence, there is no swarUpa-asiddhi in third hetu also.

Objection 13: Bimba and pratibimba are different effect. Hence, there should be different causes also. Therefore, third hetu will not be there in paksha and there will be swarUpa-asiddhi. Take for example a rainbow. While the rainbow is caused by Ishwara, its shadow in water is created by upAdhi water. Similarly, in case of echo, a sound is created by drum beat which is reflected by caves or mountains and its pratibimba, the echo is created. Thus, the cause of bimba sound is drumbeat whereas cause of pratibimba echo is mountain caves. Hence, there will no third hetu in paksha.

Answer: Echo is not pratibimba as it exists at a time when original sound is not there. Bimba and pratibimba co-exist which is not the case in case of echo. Hence, echo is not pratibimba. Further, shadow and reflection are not same. Shadow cannot be present if light is present but pratibimba can be there even where there is abundant light. It is true that if effects are different, one can infer different causes. However, in the present case, it is not yet established that bimba and pratibimba are different.

This is why it is said in VivaraNa – There is no different face-individual in the mirror, on account of having no cause, like horns on the head of rabbit.

Objection 14: A bimba-pot has its cause in clay. Its pratibimba-pot has its cause in water. They are both different. Thus, it is more logical to aver their difference rather than the identity.

Answer: There is an anyonyAshraya-dosha in your argument. You are proving the difference-of-bimba-and-pratibimba by taking help of them being different-entities and caused-by-different-entities whereas that can be used only after proving the difference-of-bimba-and-pratibimba.

Objection 15: The sun-in-the-sky is unmoving and has huge magnitude. Its reflection sun-in-the-water is moving and has little magnitude. The sun-in-the-sky cannot be touched while sun-in-the water can be touched. Also, there is no reflection of nice fragrance of kastUri in case of deer. Thus, there is clear difference between bimba and pratibimba.

Answer: There is no entity called upAdhi-gata-pratibimba. It is like horns of hare. There is pratibimba which is same as bimba (like yellow conch). Thus, there is no sun-in-the-water or deer-in-the-mirror. Once this is clear, the pratibimba-in-the-upAdhi can have no magnitude, movement, smell on account of it being horns of hare. The perceptual difference of bimba and pratibimba is on account of upAdhi. The difference in magnitude, movement, smell is on account of upAdhi and not owing to difference between bimba and pratibimba.

Objection 16: But just as we perceive pratibimba of white pot in a mirror as pot-in-mirror along with white-colour, similarly, we should perceive deer-in-the-water along with its smell.

Answer: There is no superimposition of pratibimba-tva in all the lakshaNAs of bimba. Thus, we do not accept that all the lakshaNAs of bimba must be reflected. Smell is one such example here.

Objection 17: If bimba and pratibimba are one and the same, then why is bimba white but pratibimba black.

Answer: Because upAdhi is partial towards pratibimba. It impacts only pratibimba. The features of upAdhi are imposed only in pratibimba and not in bimba.

Objection 18: But this can be held only if bimba and pratibimba are taken to be different. If they are same, then how can we say that upAdhi is partial to one but not to another.

Answer: Because upAdhi-stha-tva (being in the upAdhi) is superimposed in bimba. Bimba-with-Aropita-upAdhi-stha-tva has the features of upAdhi.

Objection 19: It is our experience that pratibimba alone is seen in the mirror and not the bimba. Your statement that pratibimba is Aropita-upAdhi-stha-tva-vishishTa-bimba is thus incorrect.

Answer: Visheshana is kArya-anvayI while upAdhi is kArya-ananvayI (<https://www.advaitasiddhi.com/blog/upadhi-upalakshana-visheshana>). Thus, upAdhi-upahita-bimba can have pratibimba-tva.

Objection 20: What exactly is the mechanism of reflection?

Answer: The chakshu-rashmi (eye-rays) gets reflected after colliding with mirror and turn backwards. Eyes can see only that which is in front of it. Thus, when eye-rays turn back, they see the face as others see our face. Thus, to see our face in opposite direction is also pramA. Just as we see a pot before us and it is pramA, similarly, we see our own face as pramA through reflection. This is averred by SureshwarAchArya also in BrihadAraNyaka BhAshya Vartika as under:

दर्पणाभिहता दृष्टिः परावृत्य स्वमाननम् । व्याप्नुवन्त्याभिमुख्येन व्यत्यस्तं दर्शयेन्मुखम् ॥

Objection 21: But then how do I see two faces in mirror, one of myself and other of person standing beside me? I should see only my face.

Answer: Whatever the reflected eye-rays see, that will be seen by you in mirror. So, there is no incongruity.

Objection 22: But this entire mechanism is inapplicable in case of Brahman as it is not the object of Chakshu.

Answer: That is not a problem. This mechanism applies in only those cases wherein the bimba is object of eyes.

Objection 23: How do we then see the stones lying in the bed of the river? We should only see our faces the eye-rays are reflected by river.

Answer: Not all eye-rays are reflected. The eye-rays which get reflected, objectify the face while the eye-rays which go inside river objectify the stones.

Objection 24: When we see pratibimba of sun in mirror, then the eye-rays go back far distance in the sky till the sun. Then, they should also see the back of Chaitra and other things behind him.

Answer: As long as there is no obstruction to the reflected eye-rays, there shall be pratibimba. Chaitra's front-body itself is the impediment to the reflected eye-rays in so far as Chaitra's back-body is concerned.

Objection 25: Then why don't we see our face in a rock as that too reflects the eye-rays back.

Answer: It is because the rock is unclean. Eye-rays see the bimba only when the upAdhi is not unclean.

Objection 26: If bimba and pratibimba are identical, then just as it is difficult to see afternoon sun, similarly it should be difficult to see pratibimba of afternoon-sun.

Answer: The reason for difficulty in seeing afternoon-sun is presence of intense light directly before the eyes. In case of pratibimba, that reason is not there and hence it is not difficult to see the pratibimba sun.

Objection 27: In case of redness-of-crystal arising out of a nearby kept red flower, the redness-of-crystal is pratibimba of redness-of-flower. Pratibimba is same as bimba. Hence, redness-of-crystal should be real, but VivaraNa holds it to be mithyA. How is that possible?

Answer: Pratibimba has avyApya-vritti whereas AbhAsa has vyAvpya-vritti. That is to say, AbhAsa is pervaded in upAdhi whereas pratibimba remains localized somewhere within the upAdhi. The redness-of-crystal is pervaded in crystal. Hence, redness-of-crystal is not pratibimba but AbhAsa. Also, there cannot be pratibimba of only dharma leaving out its locus. On this count also, there cannot be pratibimba of redness-of-flower as there is no corresponding pratibimba of its locus i.e. flower. Thus, redness-of-crystal is not a pratibimba. It is AbhAsa and hence is mithyA.

Objection 28: Only when one holds bimba and pratibimba to be different, one can say that upAdhi is pratibimba-partial. If they are identical, how can this statement be made?

Answer: Pratibimba is real and is identical with bimba. We don't say – it is not face. We only say – face is not in the mirror. Thus, what is negated is upAdhi-stha-tva of pratibimba. Had pratibimba not been real, it should have been said – it is not face (like it is not silver). Thus, there is bAdha of only sansarga and not of swarUpa.

Thus, in siddhAnta, we don't accept a pratibimba different from bimba having same ontological status. Rather, bimba with superimposed dharma of upAdhi-stha-tva is referred by the word pratibimba. The difference between them is merely perceptual, illusory and caused by upAdhi.